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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the life and work of Lawrence A. Cremin, a leading historian of U.S. education and the president of Teachers College, Columbia University from 1974-84. Among his most important books are "The Transformation of the School" (1961), and his trilogy: "American Education: The Colonial Experience 1607-1783" (1970), "American Education: The National Experience 1783-1876" (1980), and "American Education: The Metropolitan Experience 1876-1980" (1988). The paper offers analyses of these books and other writings of Cremin, as well as accounts of criticism of his work. The paper includes comments on his contributions as a teacher and administrator and a transcript of a 1988 interview with Cremin. An extensive bibliography lists Cremin's books and reviews of them, as well as articles by (or interviews with) Cremin, and writings about, biographical sketches of, and obituaries and memories of Cremin. (DB)

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By Franklin Parker

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Lawrence Arthur Cremin (1925-90), U.S. Educational Historian and President, Teachers College, Columbia University (1974-84): Contributions to Higher Education

By Franklin Parker

Historian of U.S. Education

Lawrence Arthur Cremin, leading historian of U.S. education since the 1960s, died of a heart attack on September 4, 1990. Of his 16 books, The Transformation of the School, 1961, won the Bancroft Prize in American history in 1962. The second volume of his trilogy, American Education: The National Experience 1783-1876, 1980, won the Pulitzer Prize in History in 1981, the first education book to win that award. (Volume one, American Education: The Colonial Experience 1607-1783, 1970; volume three, American Education: The Metropolitan Experience 1876-1980, 1988.) This trilogy is unique in placing schools, for the first time, as one among many educative agencies shaping the American mind: family and households, churches and synagogues, libraries and museums, agricultural fairs and farms, settlement houses and Y's, boy and girl scouts, factories and shops, armed forces, publishing houses (books, magazines, newspapers), radio and advertising, movies and television. "Taken together," wrote educational historian Sol Cohen, "this trilogy represents the most imposing contribution to the historiography of American education of our time."[1]

Purpose of This Account

Cremin's 16 books comprise a highly respected scholar's careful research and thought about the role public schools play in American society, how they affect and are affected by all other institutions which shape Americans' understanding of and ability to cope with national and world problems. His interpretation of U.S. educational history as molded by a vast array of educative forces was opposed by revisionist educational historians, some of whom (radical leftists) believe that U.S. public schools are influenced by big business to sort students economically, socially, and ethnically, in order to perpetuate underclass worker conditions that assure big corporate profits.

Teaching and Writing Career

Lawrence Cremin was born October 31, 1925, in New York City. A memoir by Ellen C. Lagemann and Patricia A. Graham, former students and later colleagues at

Teachers College, Columbia University (TCCU), tells of his parents, Arthur T. Cremin and Theresa (Borowick) Cremin, who grew up on on Manhattan's Lower East Side, married young, and founded the private "New York Schools of Music." As the older of their two children, Lawrence worked at the schools, distributed leaflets advertising the 25 cent lessons, sold musical instruments, edited his father's story books about the violin, told jokes when Carnegie Hall school concerts were delayed, played the piano, and conducted the music school's orchestra.[2]

He attended the Model School of Hunter College and Townsend Harris High School, a City College-run public high school for the gifted, from which he graduated at age fifteen and a half. His parents expected him to enter the family business. His father was always disappointed that his talented son did not become a concert pianist.

Cremin entered City College (now City University) of New York in 1940, left to serve nineteen months in the U.S. Army Air Corps, and was stationed in Milledgeville, GA, where, being separated from family and friends, he later said, forced him to grow up. After his discharge he returned to City College, November 1945, and earned the B.S. degree in 1946. Helped by the G.I. Bill, he began graduate study at TCCU, intending to major in psychology and music. Because of TCCU's requirements, he took Foundations of Education courses in history, political science, sociology, anthropology, and economics, which influenced him to specialize in the history of U.S. education. He earned the M.A. degree (1947) and Ph.D. degree (1949) under extraordinary thinkers in the Department of Social and Philosophical Foundations of Education: Lyman Bryson, George S. Counts, Harold O. Rugg, Bruce Raup (whose daughter Charlotte, a mathematics teacher, he married on September 19, 1956), John L. Childs, Kenneth Benne, and R. Freeman Butts.

At Teachers College for 41 years, he was instructor, 1949-51; assistant professor, 1951-54; associate professor, 1954-57, professor, 1957-61; and Frederick A.P. Barnard Professor of Education, 1961-90. He was director of TCCU's Division of Philosophy, Social Sciences, and Education, 1958-74; director of its Institute of Philosophy and Politics of Education, 1965-74; and president of TCCU, 1974-84. Besides editing the "Classics in Education" series for Teachers College Press (52 volumes, 1987), he was also advisory editor to New York's Arno Press, which reprinted 161 important out-of-print education books in its American Education: People, Ideas, Institutions series, 1970-72.

Recipient of Many Honors

As TCCU professor, he was also president of the Chicago-based Spencer Foundation, 1985-90 (which awards grants for educational research), and gave distinguished lectures, most of which were published. His honors included a Guggenheim Fellowship, 1957-58; the American Educational Research Association Award for

Distinguished Contributions to Education Research, 1969; the Creative Educational Leadership Award, New York University, 1971; the Butler Medal, Columbia University, 1972; the Townsend Harris Medal, College of the City of New York, 1974; the Medal for Distinguished Service to Public Education, New York Academy of Public Education, 1982; the President's Medal, Hunter College, 1984; and the Carnegie Corporation of New York Medal, 1988.

Cremin's nine honorary degrees included the Litt.D. from both Columbia University, 1975, and Rider College, 1979; the L.H.D. degree from Ohio State University, 1975, Kalamazoo College, 1976, Widener University, 1983, and George Washington University, 1985; the LL.D. degree from University of Bridgeport, 1975, University of Rochester, 1980, and Miami University, 1983.

Diane Ravitch's Recollections

Diane Ravitch remembers Cremin, her TCCU doctoral adviser, as a voracious reader who seemed to recall all that he had ever read. His lecture classes, she wrote, were always packed. He was well organized, carefully prepared, and his lectures bubbled with intellectual vitality. He had an inner serenity, a sense of peace that came from doing exactly what he wanted to do and as he wanted to do it. He wrote to please himself, not for outside critics--although he cared how his work was received. He was his own severest critic.[3]

As TCCU President, 1974-84, engrossed in administration, fund raising, and public functions, he still maintained a relentless schedule of research, writing, and lecturing. These were, in fact, his peak scholarship years.

By the mid 1970s, she recalled, Cremin invited her to review key radical revisionist books for the National Academy of Education. He reviewed her manuscript, The Revisionists Revised, and patiently explained to her the value of being polite to those who differ with you, no matter how severely they attack your work.

Monroe-Cubberley Historiography Criticized

Cremin's interpretation of U.S. educational history, on which his renown rests, was itself a revision of an earlier, long dominant Monroe-Cubberley historiography. The Ford Foundation's Fund for the Advancement of Education (1951-67), which pioneered in team teaching and the Master of Arts in Teaching, also initiated changes in U.S. educational historiography. A Fund for the Republic conference in 1958 found U.S. educational history "shamefully neglected by American historians." The Fund-sponsored Committee on the Role of Education in American History (founded in May 1956) offered grants from spring 1957 for monographic studies by history department faculty or students on the role of American education, formal and informal, in American history.

Harvard University historian Bernard Bailyn's 1960 Education in the Forming of American Society: Needs and Opportunities for Study, partly funded by the Committee, criticized "educational missionaries" Paul Monroe (1869-1947) and Ellwood P. Cubberley (1868-1941), who dominated the teaching and writing of history of education in schools of education. Not trained as historians and not presenting educational history as part of social and intellectual history, they created distortions by using educational history to inspire teachers and to dignify the teaching profession. To correct this myopic view, Bailyn urged historians to think of education "not only as formal pedagogy but as the entire process by which a culture transmits itself across the generations."[4]

The Bailyn Correction

Describing how European cultures adjusted to the New World, Bailyn viewed education broadly to include the family, religious denominations, race relations, apprenticeship training, and the economy, as well as formal schools. Cubberley had erred in not looking for public school origins in the colonial period as European transplants, had looked narrowly at formal schools, and had been evangelistic in using school history to inspire teachers with professional zeal. By underscoring the complex socioeconomic and political structure which education served and in which it functioned, Bailyn forced historians of education to rethink their basic assumptions about the nature of education and reasons its history should be studied. Not until Cremin's seventh book, The Transformation of the School, 1961, did he rise to Bailyn's challenge.

Cremin's Early Books

Cremin's first books were educational histories typical of the time. The American Common School: An Historic Conception, 1951, his revised TCCU doctoral dissertation, presented public schools as arising to nurture and bind the diverse groups struggling to form and perpetuate a republican form of government. This theme continued in his second book, A History of Education in American Culture, 1953, coauthored with his professor, R. Freeman Butts. Butts came to TCCU as assistant professor in 1935 after receiving a University of Wisconsin doctorate. In the controversy over whether historians of education should include all historical, social, political, economic,and other shaping factors (as historians wanted) or be professionally centered to help teachers solve school problems (as education professors preferred), Butts sided with progressive educators, but also held that this ideological commitment need not hinder historical objectivity or the use of all relevant historical material.

The functional view of using educational history to help teachers appreciate their profession continued in Cremin's third book, History of Teachers College, Columbia University, 1954, coauthored with D.A. Shannon and M.E. Townsend; and in his fourth

and fifth books, both coauthored with Merle L. Borrowman, Public Education and the Future of America, 1955, and Public Schools in Our Democracy, 1956. His sixth book, The Republic and the School: Horace Mann on the Education of Free Men, 1957, with his introduction to excerpts from Horace Mann's writings, was published in the Teachers College Press "Classics in Education" series (which Cremin edited and which had 52 titles by 1987). Before fame came with his seventh book, The Transformation of the School, 1961, he helped make the teaching and writing of history of education respectable to both historians and educators.

History of Education's Rise to Academic Respectability

Cremin helped bridge the conflict over whether educational history should functionally aid teacher education (progressive educators' preference) or be a liberal arts discipline (historians' preference). He was president of the History of Education Society in 1959-60 and was also president of the National Society of College Teachers of Education (NSCTE) in 1961. NSCTE, a progressive education stronghold, sponsored the History of Education Society (HES) and supported its History of Education Journal. In his leadership role, Cremin helped transform the HES in 1960 which, with its new History of Education Quarterly (HEQ), was supported by the University of Pittsburgh. HEQ was edited there by Ryland Crary, formerly Cremin's TCCU colleague. HES broke away from the NSCTE and in 1968 became Division F (History and Historiography of Education) of the American Educational Research Association (AERA). Thus, in sequence, the Ford Foundation's Fund for the Advancement of Education and its Committee on the Role of Education in American History prepared the way for a new approach to educational historiography, also urged by Bailyn's 1960 Education in the Forming of American Society. In following Bailyn's lead and in allying the HES with the AERA, Cremin helped assure educational historiography's rise to academic respectability.[5]

Transformation of the School, 1961

In Transformation, Cremin saw progressive education as part of a larger movement of Progressivism, "a vast humanitarian effort to apply the promise of American life" to a "puzzling new urban-industrial civilization," a many faceted movement that sought "to use the school as a fundamental lever of social and political regeneration."[6]

Cremin believed the movement began with Joseph M. Rice's (1857-1934) critical Forum articles, October 1892-June 1893.[7] Rice stirred reader interest in describing the apathy, political interference, corruption, and incompetence he found in public schools in 36 U.S. cities. A New York pediatrician who had studied professional education at the Universities of Jena and Leipzig, Rice was not the first to protest the dull routine in politically corrupt post-Civil War public schools. Francis Wayland Parker, called by John

Dewey the father of progressive education, had reformed Quincy, MA, public schools along progressive education lines in the 1870s. After crediting Rice as the first to urge nationwide school reform, Cremin then described the many other strands that made up the often contradictory progressive education reform movement.

Vocational education, needed by expanding industry, was combined with the older (Heinrich) Pestalozzian idea of educating the hand, heart, and head of the whole child. Victor Della Vos's apprenticeship methods, seen in the Moscow Imperial Technical School's products at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, 1876, impressed Massachusetts Institute of Technology President John D. Runkle who, with Washington University (St. Louis) Professor Calvin W. Woodward, helped advance manual training in U.S. public schools after 1879. Endorsed by business, labor, educators, and social workers and aided by World War I needs, the 1917 Smith-Hughes Act gave federal aid to vocational education, as the 1914 Smith-Lever Act had given federal aid to agricultural extension education.

Sensitive to immigrant children's needs, Jane Addams of Hull House and other social workers, urged public schools to provide social and health services and to include domestic science, kindergartens, child care, and night classes for adult citizenship education.

Other influences came from university reaction to formalism in philosophy, psychology, and the social sciences. Psychologist G. Stanley Hall initiated child development studies and a child-centered school emphasis. Edward L. Thorndike emphasized stimulus-response laws of learning, scientific testing, and adult learning. George D. Strayer brought a scientific approach to school administration through school surveys.

From the teaching profession came publicity about Francis W. Parker's progressive methods at Quincy, MA; and John Dewey's progressive methods in the University of Chicago laboratory school. Key progressive schools were described in Dewey's 1915 Schools of Tomorrow (written with his daughter Evelyn): Marietta Johnson's Organic School, Fairhope, AL; Junius L. Meriam's experimental school, University of Missouri; the Francis Parker School, Chicago; Caroline Pratt's Play School, New York; the Kindergarten, TCCU; and some Gary and Indianapolis, IN, public schools. Dewey's Democracy and Education, 1916, synthesized a quarter century of educational protests into a systematic theory of progressive education.

The Progressive Education Association (PEA, 1919-57), started by liberal-progressive parents and teachers in Washington, DC, had 5,000 members in 1927 and 10,500 in 1938. Its journal, Progressive Education, extolled progressive education

experiments. Post-World War II changes and reactions, however, evoked massive criticism of progressive education and demands for a return to traditional subject matter mastery. In 1955, the PEA dissolved, and in 1957, the year of Sputnik, its journal, Progressive Education, stopped publication.

Cremin offered seven reasons for progressive education's decline: (1) success brought cliques and factional strife; (2) the movement was strong on protests but weak on programs; (3) progressive methods succeeded under skilled teachers but were chaotic under many average teachers; (4) the movement suffered from its own success, since progressives offered no next steps for schools that had changed; (5) it suffered from the inevitable shift to post-World War II conservatism; (6) it lost its supporting coalition of business people, labor unions, farmers, and intellectuals; and (7) it failed to keep pace with proliferating social welfare agencies, and industry-sponsored education programs.

One reviewer of Transformation praised Cremin as "the first historian to take the transformation of the school seriously enough to place it in the context of history and give it the considerable attention it deserves." Another wrote: "In...concise yet readable style, he blends the skills of the historian, social scientist, and educator." Yet another wrote, "The first definitive history of the Progressive Education movement."

Transformation was criticized for containing "very little on the Essentialist critics [of progressive education] and on the European exponents of progressive education." John Rury, evaluating Transformation 30 years later, wrote that Cremin wrongly lumped together as part of the progressive movement Edward L. Thorndike with John Dewey, Jane Addams, and others. Revisionist historians believe that Thorndike's influence on testing was harmful, that by tracking and separating students Thorndike hurt students of lower ability. Rury also believed that Cremin had overlooked the literature then available showing discrimination against blacks, girls, and immigrant children, discrimination about which progressives did little. Rury believed that progressive education made little impact on inner city schools where teachers taught mainly as they had been taught. Cremin, he wrote, had no theory to explain progressivism or to account for its sudden rise. Yet, Transformation remains, Rury concluded, "an indispensable piece of any educational historian's library." He had read it first as an undergraduate 18 years before and had been thrilled at how Cremin made educational history exciting and meaningful. For him and others, he added, Transformation was a "starting point toward becoming an historian of education." "Cremin," he wrote, "is an excellent storyteller."[8]

Paul Nash faulted Cremin for not defining progressive education and for not describing its roots in the naturalism of Rousseau's Emile, or in sense realists' (J.A. Comenius) emphasis on "things before words," or in late eighteenth and early nineteenth

century individualism, or in the reform ideas of Heinrich Pestalozzi and Friedrich Froebel, or in the influence of pragmatists Charles S. Peirce and William James.

Nash pointed out that George S. Counts and other social reconstructionists, who tried but failed to commit the PEA to a radical social position, criticized progressive education for its "irresponsible individualism." Nash wrote that the movement was not, as Cremin believed, "an effort to cast the school as a fundamental lever of social and political regeneration." Cremin in writing Transformation, Nash believed, had no sympathy for progressive education, was not sufficiently trained in philosophy, and had not visited enough schools. Progressive education is not dead, wrote Nash, but is alive and still waiting to be put into effect.

Wonderful World of E.P. Cubberley

From 1961 Cremin held a joint appointment at TCCU and in Columbia University's history department. When Transformation won the 1962 Bancroft Prize in American history, it was praised as the new historiography which the Ford Foundation's Fund for the Advancement of Education and its Committee on the Role of Education in American History had championed. Cremin helped organize a 1964 symposium for the Committee. The paper he read there was published as The Wonderful World of Ellwood Patterson Cubberley. Like Bailyn, Cremin faulted Cubberley's popular 1919 Public Education in the United States, which "gave a generation of American schoolmen their way of looking at the world," for its narrow facts about formal schools, for glorifying teachers and teaching, and for overstating public schools' role in making American democratic institutions possible. Cremin believed that this flawed view originated in Henry Barnard's belief in the inspirational value of educational history. Barnard included many national histories of education in Europe in his influential 32-volume American Journal of Education (1855-82) and in early federal Bureau of Education publications (Barnard was Commissioner, 1867-70). This view was reflected in centennial (1776-1876) histories of education in various states. It also influenced Paul Monroe's 1905 A Textbook in the History of Education, dominated the content of his 1911-1913 five-volume Cyclopedia of Education, and was reflected in his TCCU doctoral students' dissertations on history of education in various states, widely available in the published TCCU Contributions to Education series.

Cubberley took this approach from Monroe, his TCCU major professor, and incorporated it into his 1919 Public Education in the United States, which sold some 80,000 copies by 1934 (and is still used). The Cubberley-Monroe thesis thus extolled public schools for their redemptive influence on U.S. democratic values and institutions. Trained historians refined but did not correct this parochial view of U.S. educational history until

criticized in Bailyn's 1960 Education in the Forming of American Society and revised in Cremin's 1961 Transformation.

Was the Monroe-Cubberley Approach Overly Criticized?

Educational historian Sol Cohen blamed excessive criticism of Monroe-Cubberley on liberal arts and science faculty's cold war against educationists. Public school weaknesses in the 1950s were blamed on progressive educators John Dewey, William Heard Kilpatrick, and others. Denunciation heightened after Sputnik (October 1957). The Ford Foundation's Fund for the Advancement of Education specifically barred college of education historians of education from Fund-sponsored conferences and from its research funds.

Also, progressive educators in the 1940s and 1950s who taught history of education--R. Freeman Butts, Archibald W. Anderson, Claude Eggertsen, and others--used educational history to support social reconstructionism. This 1930s Great Depression movement led by George S. Counts, Harold O. Rugg, and Theodore Brameld tried but failed to have public school students actively discuss and correct major U.S. socioeconomic-political problems. Counts, who edited the progressive journal Social Frontier, joined liberal historian Charles A. Beard who, as American Historical Association president from 1933, aligned its Commission on the Social Studies with educational progressives to promote social reconstructionism.

Making the history of education a handmaiden of social reconstructionism discredited the history of education at a time when progressive education was being repudiated. New historians of education, Lawrence Cremin, Merle Borrowman, and others, broke with Butts and other progressive educators; identified with Bailyn, the Committee, and pure historians; and aligned the HES and its HEQ with the AERA. These moves, plus Cremin's 1961 Transformation, gained acceptance and status for U.S. educational history among both historians and educators.

Cremin's American Education Trilogy

Cremin's paper read to the American historians' group in 1964, later published as The Wonderful World of Ellwood Patterson Cubberley, raised questions suggesting new approaches to American educational history: What agencies, formal and informal, shaped (and how did they shape?) American thought and character? Why not make use in educational history of social, international, political, and other comparisons? Why not look at the impact of all other educative agencies, besides schools, on the American mind and character? Chance was about to favor Cremin.

Soon after he read this paper, he wrote, "there occurred one of those unexpected events that give decisive direction to [one's] life and work." American Historical

Association (AHA) Secretary W. Stull Holt asked if he would write a comprehensive history of American education, sponsored by the AHA and the U.S. Office of Education, for the latter's centennial in 1967. After Cremin's acceptance, Holt for AHA and U.S. Commissioner of Education Francis Keppel got Carnegie Corporation of New York President John Gardner's financial backing for the project.[9] Cremin, who thought he could complete a three-volume history in seven years, began the work during a 1964-65 sabbatical year at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Palo Alto, CA. The trilogy took 23 years to complete, totaled 1,775 pages of text, and had 240 pages of bibliographic essays.

American Education: The Metropolitan Experience 1876-1980

"The Metropolitan Experience," wrote educational historian Sol Cohen, "by itself is a seminal work in American educational historiography...a rich and learned text....Cremin's breadth of knowledge is staggering." The 781-page book, including a 68-page bibliographic essay, is not consecutively written. Each of its four sections (The Moral Commonwealth, The Progressive Nation, The Informed Society, and A Metropolitan Education) moves chronologically from 1876 to 1980. Each is a series of snapshots of American education and is virtually complete in itself. Cremin saw the U.S. as a nation of cities and an exporter of culture to the world, in both of which education played a key role.

In Part 1, The Moral Commonwealth, Cohen wrote, Cremin showed how religious beliefs have defined U.S. educational direction. The increasingly secularized Protestant churches, always interested in educating their own adherents and keenly feeling their stewardship for U.S. destiny, came to grips with metropolitan America in a "configuration" of agencies that assured their input into family and home, into public schools, and into the church, Sunday school, and the religious press. Increasingly concerned with urban, largely immigrant children's needs, the Protestant churches encouraged fundamentalists and modernists to fight out their differences. Surprisingly, Cremin said that, rather than Clarence Darrow's ridiculing William Jennings Bryan's fundamentalism, the real issue in the 1925 Tennessee Scopes trial was whether parents and the local community should determine the nature of their children's education or whether an intellectual minority had the right to impose its view on parents and the community. The still unresolved issues raised by the Scopes trial are: Who should control local public schools and how? What are the bounds of responsibility of educators, parents, and the public? What should be taught? Do tax supported schools have the right to teach beliefs that contravene parents' beliefs? The views and influence of a dozen or so religious leaders on these questions are pursued.

Cremin, said Cohen, described how blacks and all other ethnic groups have been affected, for good or ill, not only by public schools and colleges, but also by churches,

synagogues, other religious schools, Y's, youth clubs, Bible institutes, and the large outpouring from religious presses, radio and television. Part One ended with these thoughts: (l) it is time to abandon the myth of the common school and realize that multitudinous private and religious agencies are educating (or thwarting) American hopes and aspirations; (2) U.S. education today can only be understood by realizing how it is affected by the vast network of religious educational agencies; (3) religious groups insist on teaching traditional values; and (4)-most striking of all--common school roots are not so deep that they could not be pulled up by religiously committed groups if traditional values were crucially threatened. If this happened, the consequences would not be so dire as public school partisans might think.[10]

The Metropolitan Experience: Comments and Criticism

Three historians of education commented critically on Metropolitan Experience and Cremin replied.[11]

Robert L. Church (Michigan State University) comments: To "popularization" and "proliferation," two characteristics Cremin attributed to U.S. public education in the nineteenth century, he added twentieth century "politicalization," defined as "the increasingly direct harnessing of education to social ends."

Horace Mann wanted schools to teach nondenominational general Christianity and appreciation of republican government. In contrast, twentieth century education, led by John Dewey, emphatically wanted to use schools for social ends. Thus, various groups, usually conservative ones, tried to inculcate their particular orthodoxies: the National Association of Manufacturers, capitalistic values; farmers, the value of drinking milk; fundamentalists, the pitfalls of evolution; militant college students, U.S. mistakes in Vietnam; and so on. Cremin's apparent distrust of organized schooling grew out of its politicalization. After his 1961 Transformation, Cremin saw that more and more individual learners had veered away from progressive agencies' attempts to influence schools; that for individual learners such as those New Yorkers whose lives he traced in Metropolitan Experience, learning had been an escape from progressive education-oriented teaching.

Cremin used New York City as the showcase of metropolitan education because of its infinite variety of educational outlets (libraries, museums, bookstores, and so on, as well as schools and colleges). He cited its very complexity as disrupting the efforts of those who would use education for particular social ends. In ending Metropolitan Experience with Margaret Mead's idea of developing a "worldwide shared culture," Cremin was less attracted by her implied commonality and more attracted by the diversity she embraced, diversity of thought, language, and educational outcomes. According to Church, Cremin's quest was for a never ending diversity in education that resisted the standardization, the

centrally mediated culture, sought by public schooling advocates. Church believes that Cremin disliked politicalization of schools and saw learning occurring randomly, as in Ivan Illich's Deschooling Society.

"Thus," Church ends, "the most comprehensive history of American ever attempted leaves us" with Cremin's conclusion that two centuries of U.S. political effort to extend educational opportunity does not work and that continuing politicalization is dangerous.

Michael Katz's (University of Pennsylvania) comments on Metropolitan Experience: As did other history of education professors, Katz became a specialist in educational history as a consequence of reading Cremin's 1961 Transformation. He appreciates Cremin for moving the history of U.S. education into the mainstream of modern scholarship. Cremin, Katz says, avoided showing himself as either a liberal leftist or a conservative rightist, but in Metropolitan Experience he showed himself to be an "urban liberal."

Cremin's unconventional presentation of events from different perspectives in each of the book's four sections jars the reader. This deliberate juxtaposition makes Cremin's work (again deliberately) a meditation on the meaning of American education. At first, Cremin's broad definition of education seems liberating, but by making education synonymous with culture and society, he neglected such important topics as kindergartens, high schools, and teacher unions. (Cremin defined education broadly "as the deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to transmit, evoke, or acquire knowledge, values, attitudes and sensibilities, as well as any learning that results from the effort, direct or indirect, intended or unintended.")

Cremin's key concept is that the U.S. became a nation of cities and an exporter of culture. Education, involved in both spheres, became more and more political as conflicting groups tried to influence education in order to have their ideas prevail. In stressing an underlying consensus, Cremin wrote too little about such controversies arising from politicalization as teacher unions, busing, and 1960s student radicalism. In focusing on the themes of popularization, proliferation, and politicalization, Cremin avoided analytic social history--how education interacted with local economics, politics, and social structures. He praised New York City's rich variety of educational opportunities but did not tell of industry's flight from the city, the city's subsequent economic decline and fiscal crisis, its staggering high school dropout rate, and its dismal urban school achievement. "Cremin...is more worried about culture [i.e., television's bad effects] than schooling." Unconverted by Cremin's vision, Katz sees a failed urban America with bipolar incomes, decayed infrastructure, drug-induced violence, shrinking opportunities, impoverished children, and worried and angry people.

Harold Silver (Oxford, England) thinks Cremin offered both a procedure for future historians and a view of how education should be pictured. According to Silver, Cremin, the ultimate deschooler, reformulated "education" into "the educative society." After probing most of the nonschool educative agencies, Cremin concluded that school and television were the American people's "great common educative experience," a phrase suitable as Metropolitan Experience's subtitle. Silver questioned Cremin's coverage and balance: Why did Charles W. Eliot and the university get more attention than normal schools and community and junior colleges; why is Walter Lippmann heroically portrayed and not James B. Conant; why did the 1930s New Deal get more space than President Johnson's War on Poverty; why the scant attention to how students learn; and why is there no mention of the disadvantaged and handicapped? By emphasizing nonschool educative agencies, Cremin's imbalance is away from schools, which are central to the U.S. educational experience. Despite the imbalance, Silver concludes Cremin's Metropolitan Experience is alive with tantalizing questions about what education is and should be for future historians to tackle.

Before replying to the three critics, Cremin said that he conceived of the trilogy as a synthesis, a reinterpretation. Knowing that he could not cover everything, he chose to be selective, trusting that the extensive bibliographic notes would allow "others to retrace my steps and go beyond." He tried, he said, to show the many ways in which popularization, proliferation, and politicalization became U.S. education's chief characteristics, leading to both achievement and problems.

Robert L. Church, Cremin replied, erroneously asserted that he (Cremin) opposed organized public schools, that he portrayed American education as essentially "escaping from teaching," and that he liked the complexity of education in New York and other cities because it disrupted the efforts of those using education for prescribed social ends. On the contrary, Cremin asserted, cities do offer an extraordinary range of curricula and educational opportunities. Each of the eight persons described took from New York's educational milieu what they wanted and what they thought they needed, often in nonschool educative agencies. Far from distrusting state-run schools, Cremin replied, he traced public school improvements at length and showed how the important 1954 Brown decision opened and improved schools. To spotlight the rise of nonschool educative agencies was not to denigrate public schools. Indeed, one purpose of the book was to enhance public schools and teachers by making them aware of such other educative influences as television.

To Michael Katz's criticism of the lack of boundaries to his wide definition of education, Cremin agreed that kindergartens, high schools, and teacher unions were important (and were mentioned). But he directed attention to families, newspapers, and

religious revivals because they may have been even more important overall in twentieth century education and because they had previously been neglected.

Cremin agreed with Katz's observation that he is neither left nor right politically although he has learned from both. He preferred the label "urban democrat" rather than Katz's characterization of him as "urban liberal." Cremin, who agreed with Katz's list of urban ills, would try to counter these ills with voter registration efforts, decent public education (including adult education), and a narrowing of the gap between rich and poor through appropriate income and inheritance taxes.

Cremin believed Harold Silver to be in error in saying that Metropolitan Experience speaks more to the future than to the past. The book's central theme is how metropolitan America has required more of schooling in time, scope, intensity, and effectiveness; required more of childrearing institutions, more of adult education institutions (including workplace education), and more of the media. The book is about how individuals and institutions have responded to educational challenges over the past century.

To Silver's charge of imbalanced coverage, Cremin explained that because the media may have become more pervasive and influential than schools, which was what Walter Lippmann predicted in the 1920s, Lippmann is discussed at length. The book was not about the New Deal, the Fair Deal, or the War on Poverty, which are contextual occurrences; it was about twentieth century educational aspirations and institutions. While the common educative experience of Americans is one theme of the book, it is balanced by the diverse experiences depicted in the biographies of eight New Yorkers. The most important educational influence on Alfred E. Smith, Jr., came from lower Manhattan political clubhouses; for Elizabeth D.H. Clarke, from her family and the YWCA; for Chinese immigrant Hop Kun Leo Chiang, from the laundry business; and so on.

Cremin Interviewed

Education Week Interview, 1988

After publication of the last volume of his trilogy, The Metropolitan Experience, Cremin was interviewed in Education Week (condensed interpretation):[12]

Question: Why did you define education so broadly, ranging from schools to churches to TV?

Cremin: Canvassing a broad range of institutions, I thought, would shed better light on present U.S. educational problems.

Question: What did you mean: education is the "characteristic mode of American reform"?

Cremin: Because it is so intertwined with U.S. aspirations, I characterized education as "popularization," or the overwhelming way people want to give and receive it; as

"proliferation" or, wide availability in many places and in many forms; and as "politicalization" or, responsiveness to social needs and aspirations. The late philosopher Hannah Arendt, for example, was surprised when schools were first used to desegregate society. Why burden children, she asked; why not begin with housing? Another example of politicalization is the belief that by remaking secondary school curriculum we can become economically competitive in the world. Schools have been responsive to societal needs and sometimes too vulnerable to partisan purposes.

Question: Can we ever depoliticalize schools?

Cremin: I don't think we can or should remove the political influence on schools. We need to be aware that some kinds of politicalization are healthier for schools than others.

Question: Did you highlight progressive education in The Metropolitan Experience because you thought the movement had been a major vehicle for social change?

Cremin: As the U.S. became a "metropolitan society," various reformers used schools to deliver new or different knowledge, training (both vocational and professional), and civic responsibility. They used schools to try to achieve the good life but could not agree on what the good life is. I think now that the progressive education movement left us more divided and more in conflict than I thought in my 1961 Transformation of the School. Because school reform groups all believed themselves to be progressive, we need to rethink the movement's influence and legacy.

Question: Do we hear today echoes of the 1920s fundamentalist-modernist battle?

Cremin: I gave religious traditions much space in my trilogy in order to understand better today's society. Christian fundamentalists, whose influence grew after the 1925 Dayton, TN, Scopes trial, now have so many educational institutions, such as the Moody Bible Institute, with many of them accredited. Evangelicals of the 1970s and 1980s understood better the power of their educational institutions than did the secular intellectuals who thought that schools alone could change the social order. Fundamentalists came to favor politics as a way to evangelize for a better social order, as shown by 1988 Presidential candidate Pat Robertson.

Question: Is a consensus developing about using schools for moral education?

Cremin: Earlier, schools claimed religious neutrality but in fact conveyed a general Protestantism. Now, most Americans prefer a religious pluralism with enough commonality so that people of different faiths can live harmoniously. A redefined common value system is being fought out in the schools by the Supreme Court, legislatures, pressure groups, professional educators, lay people, and families. It will not be defined in a common curriculum. The school reflects family values up to

a point; beyond that, a free society owes its children awareness and experiences they will not get from families and neighborhoods.

Question: What about values conveyed by TV?

Cremin: TV does give society a common point of reference, as the McGuffey readers did a hundred years ago. We once considered radio and TV as in the public domain, as belonging to the people, but I do not want private commercial TV to define American values. The most important thing public TV can do is to show viewers how TV and film influence and control viewers in good and bad ways.

Question: What happened to John Dewey's notion of an educated community?

Cremin: Dewey, our greatest twentieth century philosopher, gave us a noble vision of what education might be and do in helping make each individual most worthy, rational, and intelligent.

Question: Is Dewey's notion that schools can change the social order true today?

Cremin: Dewey's vision was that schools could be engines of reform if they produced people who participated in a democratic community and were committed to service rather than to greed. G.K. Chesterton said that Christianity has never really been tried. Similarly, Dewey's vision of a democratic and participatory society has never been truly tried.

Question: As schools have become systematized, have they lost the ability to serve the individual?

Cremin: Bureaucracy can stifle. It can also insure fairness. We need to find ways to reach those who do not do well at school, to allow teachers who care deeply to engage the untouched, uninterested, and unmotivated with math, language, history, and science. So far, we do not have the pedagogical knowledge and skill to reach them. When we give them shop courses instead of knowledge, we rob them.

Conclusion

As Historian

Cremin was fortunate and successful in his career choice as historian of education. The Ford Foundation's Fund for the Advancement of Education and the Fund's Committee on the Role of Education in American History, along with Bernard Bailyn's 1960 Education in the Forming of American Society, all played their roles, leading to Cremin's Bancroft Prizewinning 1961 The Transformation of the School. The concept, research, approach, organization, and writing skills were all his own. The 1964 conference of historians he helped convene for the Committee and the paper he read there, resulting in The Wonderful World of Ellwood Patterson Cubberley, led to his being asked by the

American Historical Association and the U.S. Office of Education to write for the Office's centennial what became Cremin's American Education trilogy.

Cremin's first thinking and writing for that work began during his 1964-65 year at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Palo Alto, CA. The theme of his 1965 The Genius of American Education, based on his Horace Mann Lectures, 1965, at the University of Pittsburgh, was that the genius of American education, its essence, animating spirit, and characteristic quality was its commitment to popularization--a main theme of the trilogy. Cremin's 1976 Public Education, based on his John Dewey Society Lectures, February 1975; along with his 1977 Traditions of American Education, his Merle Curti lectures at the University of Wisconsin, March 1976, summarized the trilogy's ideas and themes to that time. His 1990 Popular Education and Its Discontents was the trilogy's coda, his final summary and commentary.

Of Cremin's sixteen books, The Transformation of the School remains the first significant post World War II work in the history of American education. The American Education trilogy constitutes a lasting contribution to the history of U.S. education, three volumes that defy easy analysis and will be studied for years to come.

As Educator and Administrator

Cremin spent 44 years at TCCU as student, teacher, department chair, and president. He was president of the History of Education Society, 1959-60, and of the National Society of College Teachers of Education, 1961-62. With Israel Scheffler, Harvard philosopher of education, he helped found the National Academy of Education, modeled on the National Academy of Sciences, a body of the most distinguished scholars in that field; got the endorsement of former Harvard President James B. Conant, and the backing of the Carnegie Corporation of New York President John W. Gardner. The National Academy of Education was chartered March 26, 1965, with Ralph W. Tyler as its first president and Cremin as its second president, 1969-73. Cremin served the U.S. Office of Education (now U.S. Department of Education) in various capacities, was vice-chairman of the White House Conference on Education in 1965; was trustee of the Children's Television Workshop, 1971-87; and trustee of the Dalton School, 1975-82.

At TCCU, he was awarded the Barnard Professorship of Education, 1961, named for Frederick A.P. Barnard, Columbia University's president, 1864-89. TCCU President John H. Fischer frequently asked him to head committees, meet with trustees, and help with fundraising. At his inauguration as TCCU president, May 1974, he quoted Amos A. Lowell's remark that accepting a college presidency was like getting married: to be entered into only if one was in love, and by that definition he accepted the presidency. Cremin wanted to build and solidify TCCU during his presidency, 1974-84, but was stymied by

the national economic downturn and falling enrollment. Harold J. Noah, his colleague and TCCU's dean during his presidency, recalled at Cremin's memorial service, that Cremin's "leadership pulled us through that bad patch, and secured our future...in splendid good order."

In her memorial to Cremin, Diane Ravitch (as others have also done) praised his teaching, commented on his remarkable memory, envied his calm amid the rush of many duties, appreciated his prolific writing, and admired the time he still preserved for his wife and two children. "He was the eternal optimist," she wrote, recalling his telling her, "that we never recognize the giants among us until they are dead." Her memoir ends: "As usual, he was right."

In Retrospect

Lawrence Arthur Cremin was by any measure a significant writer, university teacher and administrator, and foundation president. Some would call him a renaissance man.

He wrote in The Metropolitan Experience preface that his parents had died while he worked on that volume, that they had read every word he had ever published, had shared with him their ideas and criticism, and that he had learned much from them. His various books are dedicated to his parents and to his wife and children. His father was a powerful, commanding figure, to whom Cremin attributed much of his own drive. He was engaged with his father in a continuous dialogue until the elder Cremin died in 1985. The interchange with his father, often over Horn and Hardart's apple pie, was vital in Cremin's education.

Cremin was fortunate in the schools he attended: the Model School of Hunter College, Townsend Harris High School, the then City College of New York, and TCCU. He spoke fondly of his fine teachers and especially of the elementary school teacher who told him he had an unusual talent for synthesis.

Cremin was the ultimate city man who saw everything in it as educative. His vacations were spent strolling its streets, visiting its cultural centers, and poring through its bookstores. He died a month short of his sixty-fifth birthday, too soon, for there was much more he could have done and written. Transformation of the School and American Education remain his legacy.

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